



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# WORLD-POLITICS.

LONDON.

---

LONDON, *April, 1907.*

No monthly commentator on English affairs can be in much doubt as to what subject at the present moment should claim his preeminent attention. There are, indeed, various matters of the first consequence now under discussion in this country. There is, for instance, Mr. Haldane's Army scheme, the most luminous and concentrated effort that has been made in our time, not only to provide England with the army she needs, but to enlist the interest and sympathies of the average Englishman in its creation and support. There is Mr. Asquith's Budget, an essay in constructive finance which so largely accords with what I may call Rooseveltian principles that a word or two on it may interest Americans. For the year 1906-7 the Chancellor of the Exchequer found himself in possession of a realized surplus of some \$27,-000,000. All realized surpluses go automatically to the redemption of the National Debt. For the current year, 1907-8, Mr. Asquith estimated a surplus of slightly over \$20,000,000. This surplus he proposes to dispose of (1) by remitting a quarter of the income tax in cases where the earned income—Mr. Asquith is the first Chancellor to attempt to differentiate between earned and unearned incomes—does not exceed \$10,000 a year; and (2) by increasing the death duties so that, in future, estates of over \$750,000 and under \$1,250,000 will pay 7 per cent. duty, estates over \$1,250,000 and under \$2,500,000 will pay 8 per cent., estates between \$2,500,000 and \$3,750,000 will pay 9 per cent., and estates between \$3,750,000 and \$5,000,000 will pay 10 per cent., while estates between \$5,000,000 and \$7,500,000 will pay 10 per cent. on the first \$5,000,000 and 11 per cent. on the remainder; estates of \$10,000,000 will pay 10 per cent. on the first \$5,000,000 and 12

per cent. on the second; and estates of over \$15,000,000 will pay 15 per cent. on everything over the first \$5,000,000. So far, I imagine, Mr. Roosevelt would be in hearty agreement with Mr. Asquith. He would also applaud as a matter of sound finance the Chancellor's determination to set aside \$7,500,000 for the redemption of the Debt. But I doubt very much whether he would approve the proposal to dedicate the sum of \$12,250,000 to a nucleus fund for old-age pensions, especially as the recipients of the fund are not, as in Germany they are, to be made to contribute to it in any form. This is a blot, a moral and social as well as a financial blot, on a Budget which otherwise is a careful and businesslike venture in national bookkeeping.

Besides Mr. Haldane's Army scheme and Mr. Asquith's Budget there are all the problems of high Imperial administration and policy suggested by Lord Cromer's resignation. I cannot stay to dwell on these except to indicate the opinion that England is nearing a moral crisis not only in Egypt, but in India, and, indeed, wherever she is in contact with alien and dependent races. The crisis consists, roughly speaking, in the fact that the work of Imperial creation has reached a point where it must now proceed side by side with the infinitely more arduous and delicate work of Imperial assimilation. By her magnificent success in all the material ends of government, Great Britain is everywhere implanting among the natives she rules a desire to share in and to direct that government themselves; and the question of how she is to meet that desire, without a loss of administrative efficiency and control, is one of the master-issues of Imperial politics. It is in Egypt, I imagine, that the problem will first take on an aspect of more than local seriousness, and Sir Eldon Gorst, who succeeds Lord Cromer, will need all the balance and all the mental accessibility which his friends know him to possess, if he is to further and not hinder its solution.

Then, again, among the subjects that are engaging the thoughts of the English people, a foremost place should be given to King Edward's tour from France to Spain and from Spain to Italy, and to the ill-natured and almost virulent criticisms that have been passed upon it by the German press. Walter Bagehot used to declare that the constitutional rights of the English sovereign were three in number—the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, and the right to warn; and he shrewdly added that a

king of great sense and sagacity would need no others. King Edward has availed himself of these rights, just as Queen Victoria did, with admirable judgment and effect. Nothing can be falser than to suppose that the occupant of the British throne plays in public affairs a part that is merely passive and ornamental. He is entitled to full knowledge and full discussion of all public transactions. He cannot overrule the Cabinet's decisions, but he may criticise, and so alter or modify, them. He may suggest amendments, raise doubts, propose alternatives, and thus help to clarify the ministerial mind. And in all such consultations it should not be forgotten that the King has some special advantages. He is permanent and his Ministers are fugitive; he is an onlooker, and they are the combatants; he can take a calm and leisurely survey, while they are blinded by a thousand bewildering details. King Edward has allowed none of his prerogatives to rust from disuse. He has even on more than one occasion pushed them so far as to provoke murmurs from the stricter Constitutionals. The abandonment of coercion in Ireland, the appointment of Sir Antony MacDonnell, and the pushing on of that great measure of appeasement which will be known through all Irish history as the Wyndham Act, were directly the result of the King's insistence; and his influence has been not less an inspiration and a support to Mr. Haldane in his task of military reform.

But it is, I think, in foreign affairs that the King has made himself felt with the greatest effect. To the three constitutional rights enumerated by Walter Bagehot, King Edward has added a fourth—that of acting as the representative, but unofficial, Ambassador of his people to the nations of Europe. Here, again, an English King has some peculiar advantages. As a constitutional but not an autocratic ruler he can speak for England while committing her to nothing; and this condition of privileged liberty, with its endless opportunities for the play of personality, is precisely the condition that King Edward knows how to make the most and best of. An excellent judge of men and affairs, learning and assimilating with extraordinary quickness, devoid of prejudices except a certain wholesome prejudice against waverers and fools, a past master at staving off friction and bringing men together and putting them at their ease, at home everywhere, always discreet, pacific and full of *bonhomie* and enjoyment, and

with what is scarcely less than a genius for knowing both what to do and say and what not to do and say, and for holding his tongue when it is all over—King Edward is perhaps better fitted than any living statesman for the function of moderator and healer. The country has watched his latest pilgrimage of peace with a growing recognition of the manifold services the King has rendered to British prestige. Compare England's position to-day with what it was in 1901, when Queen Victoria died, and you will at once become aware of a change that is little less than a revolution. In each stage of that transformation King Edward has played a part, often the leading part. If England and France have ceased to scowl at one another from Egypt to Siam, and are now on terms of unique friendliness and confidence; if English relations with Austria-Hungary and Portugal have been re cemented and strengthened; if Anglo-Italian good-will has now resumed its old traditional closeness; and if Spain has both forgotten and forgiven the outpouring of British sympathy with America during the war of 1898—the credit of these successes belongs preeminently to King Edward. And in her present mood Great Britain does not relish these successes any the less because they seem to disturb the equanimity of Germany. The fact is significant. It may even be taken as an indication of a quarter where the King's mellow and reconciling diplomacy may find further scope for its activities. But whether it is possible yet a while to arrange, or rather to rearrange, Anglo-German relations on a basis of rationality is to my mind extremely doubtful. I am more inclined to think that King Edward will rather turn his thoughts towards helping on the solution of the questions that still remain outstanding between Great Britain and Russia. The common sense of England does not understand a friendship with France that leaves the ally of France out in the cold; diplomatic negotiations with Russia are always more readily conducted with the Tsar in person than with the Foreign Office, because the Tsar alone can speak for Russia; and it is quite on the cards that King Edward may yet duplicate in St. Petersburg the inspiring triumphs he has already won in Paris, Vienna, Rome, Lisbon and Madrid. For the present, I merely wish to register the fact that his two months' tour in the Mediterranean has brought fully home to Englishmen a national consciousness of the rare diplomatic qualities that unite in their sovereign.

Another subject which is engaging the public mind, and will engage it still more in the future, is that of land reform, both urban and rural. The Liberals, backed up, as I believe, by the overwhelming approval of the nation, have entered simultaneously upon two great crusades, the one, a comparatively simple one, against the land speculator in the towns, the other against feudalism in the country. And it is upon this issue—for the two crusades, while conducted separately, form parts of a single programme—that the struggle with the House of Lords will ultimately be joined. Neither the education question, nor Temperance, nor Irish Devolution will furnish the Government with the popular momentum that can only enable them to assault the great stronghold of legislative privilege with any chance of success. But all reformers of whatever kind are at one in their attitude towards the problem of the land; and all people, in town and country, though they may not always be conscious of it, are directly or indirectly affected by it. Round the land, too, gather a vast array of national questions. Just as in America it seems impossible to approach the problem of the Trusts by any route that does not sooner or later bring you face to face with the problem of transportation, so in England any serious inquirer into the question of the unemployed, or of housing, or of physical degeneration, finds himself before long confronted by the question of the land; and, if the reforms contemplated by the Liberals are rejected or mutilated by the Lords, I fancy we shall see such an outpouring of indignation as will sweep something more than the ancient land-tenure system of this country away with it.

In the towns, the problem is to secure to the community a larger share of the wealth which its growth and industry have created. The Liberals propose to solve it by a Valuation Bill that will ascertain the value of land apart from buildings or improvements, and enable local authorities to tax it or purchase it on that value. In this way, the towns will for the first time have some control over their own development, the rating system will be remodelled, the housing question will be simplified and industry will be released from an essentially vicious and anti-social handicap. In the country districts, where society is ordered along lines of equal pleasantness and injustice, where the number of laborers has decreased by thirty per cent. in the last twenty years, where an aristocracy of birth or wealth cultivates all the

amenities of sport and a landless peasantry steadily drifts into the towns, where gamekeepers are the only class on the increase, and where magnificent estates spread their smooth lawns and coverts to the very doors of villages that are three-quarter slums, the Liberals are resolved to vest both local and national authorities with compulsory powers for the purchase of land, so that for the future a small holding may never be beyond the reach of any Englishman able and willing to cultivate it. If by these means an independent peasant proprietary can be established, leasing their holdings from the state, and if the Government bring to their assistance the indispensable equipment of cooperative societies and local land banks, and if, at the same time, the housing question in the villages is grappled with, not only will the whole structure and spirit of English rural life be revolutionized, but English agriculture will be penetrated with a new hope and a new activity. In a fine figure, in which there is equal truth and imagination, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman has been described as "leading Englishmen to the invasion of England."

In addition to these questions, there is one that is never for long allowed to remain in the background. I refer, of course, to Ireland. By the time this letter appears in print, Mr. Birrell will probably have introduced his Devolution Bill. Little beyond a purely speculative interest is taken in it because everybody assumes that it will be rejected without ceremony by the House of Lords. But there is a minor Irish question which has considerably interested people over here, and which may perhaps serve to explain to those Americans who concern themselves with Irish problems, why it is that opinion, both in England and in Ireland, is being steadily alienated from the Irish Nationalists. The name and work of Sir Horace Plunkett are, I take it, as well known to Americans as to Englishmen. His services to his native country have been incalculable. It was he who, amid inconceivable difficulties, introduced into Ireland the principles and practice of agricultural cooperation, that great movement which promises to raise Ireland to the competitive level of Denmark, and the moral results of which have been of even greater benefit than the material. It was he, again, who brought together representative Irishmen of all classes, parties and creeds in a non-political effort to formulate a constructive programme of industrial and agricultural betterment. Out of that effort sprang the Irish Department

of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, a popularly governed Department—the only one of its kind in Ireland or, for that matter, in the British Isles—working through councils and local committees on which two-thirds at least of the members are elected, and bringing for the first time expert assistance and advice to the peasant proprietor. Sir Horace Plunkett devised that Department, suggested the form its constitution should take, launched it, and from its inception, seven years ago, until to-day has directed it with an enthusiasm, an ability and a complete contempt for “politics” that are quite without precedent in the history of Irish administration. And now the Irish Nationalists have banded together to oust him from office, and it is not yet certain that they may not succeed in doing so. Their ostensible objection to his retention in the post of Vice-President of the Department is that he has not a seat in Parliament and is not a Liberal. Their real objections are that he has refused to job his patronage, that he has built up a non-political following throughout the country which the Nationalist “machine” is desperately anxious to capture, and that the Department under his advice—which it was entirely free to disregard—has subsidized the cooperative movement, a movement to which the gombeen men and publicans, to whom nine out of every ten of the Nationalist M. P.’s owe their seats, are hostile. Nothing could better show the pitiful pass to which the Irish Nationalists are reduced than that, for reasons so sordid as these, they should be endeavoring to drive from office the only Irishman of his generation who has done something enduring for the economic development of his country.

But, as I began by saying, all these subjects, attractive and momentous as they are, must yield in popular interest and in Imperial consequence to one other. That other is, of course, the Colonial Conference. Already—I write in the last week of April—it has proved itself by the resolutions it has adopted a business-like and a statesmanlike body. Already it has achieved results that must profoundly affect the structure and the evolution of the Empire. But I propose to reserve till my next letter, when they can be reviewed as a whole, the full consideration of the problems it has faced and of the solutions it has found for them.